

The impact of globalization on cultural policy: insights and emerging trends from the International Conference on Cultural Policy Research 2014

From 9th until 12th Sept 2014 nearly 500 cultural policy researchers and practitioners gathered for the International Conference on Cultural Policy Research (ICCPR), held at the University of Hildesheim in Germany.

The conference featured nearly 180 different presentations including both paper sessions and panel sessions on specific themes. Topics analyzed ranged from, to make just but a few examples, cultural diplomacy, to audience development, from cultural management and entrepreneurship to creative cities and sustainable development.

Looking at the conference programme there seemed to be a few underlying themes running across the different sessions. A theme that caught my attention was cultural policy in its international dimension including both the concepts of globalized cultural policy and the role of culture as part of international development policy. On this latter aspect particularly interesting contributions to the conference came from the Arab region, including countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Syria and Palestine which are in the process of redefining their cultural policy from scratch after the social and political changes brought about by the Arab Spring.

I will now discuss these two main topics more in details presenting some examples from the sessions I personally attended.

Cultural policy in a globalized world

Renate Buijze's paper focuses on the possibility to apply tax incentives even when a donor donates to a charity resident in another country. We are all too aware of the cuts that have affected public subsidy for culture in many European countries as a consequence of the present economic crisis. Therefore, art organisations find themselves involved in a struggle to develop successful fundraising strategies targeting also private donors. Moreover, the fact that arts organisations work increasingly across borders, selling goods and services to a global audience, touring their theatre performances across the world etc. means that they can raise funds outside their country of residence. However, the general rule is that tax incentives apply only when a donor donates to a charity resident in the same country as the donor is. This represents clearly an obstacle for art organisations wishing to develop an international fundraising strategy towards private donors and it creates a situation of unequal competition between domestic and foreign arts organizations.

Before describing practical solutions so far available, the author discusses also how globalisation has affected the consumption of arts and culture drawing on the notion of "common good" elaborated by Klamer(1). Common goods are goods "shared" by a group of people in consumption and possession. They are based on "shared knowledge" in the sense of "shared awareness" of the value of a work of art. Nowadays, people travel and do business around the world, they have foreign friends, hence, they also have a shared culture, understood as common goods which go beyond the national level. An example will clarify the concept. Public opinion in many countries felt outraged and devastated when the Talebans destroyed the Buddha statues in 2001. Not only Afghan people or Buddhists cared about these artworks

but there was also a global community expressing its dismay for such an event. This might exemplify how people residing in different countries may still be willing to donate to foreign art organisations if they are perceived as belonging to a shared culture.

Bujize's paper includes also a detailed description of currently available solutions to apply tax incentives also on donations made to art organisations resident in a country different from the one of the donor.

I believe this topic to be of great relevance to Italian organizations as they often struggle to stay economically viable and would therefore need to develop a strategy to engage individual donors, potentially facing also the competition of major international arts organizations such as Tate Galleries and the Louvre which have already established themselves as a global cultural brands.

On this respect the EU has the power to enforce its fundamental principle of the single market and is already taking action. In fact, in 2012 the European Commission presented a Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Statute for a European Foundation. The aim is to support charitable organizations to conduct cross-border activities within the EU, avoiding inefficiencies and discriminatory treatments.

A different set of solutions is also available in the private sector. Private organizations can create networks of organisations with a charitable status. The donor donates to an intermediary party holding a charitable status in the country of residence of the donor. Later this intermediary party transfers the donation to the charity abroad. Examples of such networks are the King Baudouin Foundation United States(2) and Transnational Giving Europe(3).

The creative class on the move

A different take on globalization was presented by Anna Lipphardt who carried out a research on the impact of mobility into artists' careers within the EU. More than being simply a consequence of globalization, mobility is nowadays actively promoted by the EU as a way of fostering cultural cooperation and integration among the member-states. Mobility has actually been conceptualized not only as an opportunity but also as a fundamental right of each EU citizen, i.e. the "free movement of person" principle, and a kind of compulsory way to success for artists. Mobility then goes hand in hand with the concept of the creative city and municipalities across the EU compete to attract the best international talents. The general narrative states that the more artists are able to travel and present their work abroad, the better it is for the economy, for European integration, for intercultural dialogue etc. The positive effects of mobility are taken for granted and usually go unquestioned. However, Lipphardt's research highlights other less positive implications of these mobility policies.

The promotion of international mobility is, in fact, accompanied by other dynamics which can be described as consequences of widespread neoliberal policies. Neoliberal principles understand culture and the creative industries as great drivers of economic growth and promote a general withdraw of public funding for culture based long term commitment, favoring instead an approach to culture based on projects and events. This means that artists are expected to become entrepreneurial, pitching their work to apply to project-based funds. Obviously competition to take part in mobility projects is very high and this drives down remunerations and expenses refund for artists, contributing to a situation where on average artists can expect lower income than the national average and reduced job security. Differently from what happens for other highly mobile workers such as business professionals and university professors, artists lack also any kind of administrative support. They need to be their own project managers, apply for funds, make visa, travel and accommodation arrangements. After all this administrative work is done, very little time is left for the actual creative output.

The “required” ongoing pursuit of mobility means also frequent relocation and precarious work where labor law regulations succumb in a free art market. This makes it then very difficult for artists to establish professional organizations to lobby for improvements in labor conditions. Partnerships and family life are another area negatively impacted by these working conditions. Female artists appear to face a structural disadvantage: mobility projects usually do not include childcare arrangements and being short-term they make also schooling arrangements impossible. The fact that the key years to establish a career collide with the reproductive stage of life means female artists are less likely to have children than their male colleagues, resulting in inequalities of opportunities.

This paper is, therefore, particularly relevant for those practitioners involved in devising mobility schemes. The paradigm of “mobility as opportunity” needs to be approached with a more inquisitive mind in order to address the existing pitfalls.

Cultural stratification in a global world

Bringing the discussion to a more theoretical level, Nada Švob-?oki? discussed how globalization has affected cultural policy. Starting from the premises of the diminished role of national states and the fact that globalization has created a cultural context for fast and effective exchange of content, which brings about also cultural change, she introduced the concept of cultural stratification. If we still accept national borders as a way of describing cultural policies at least for research purposes, three “levels” of cultural policy are identified. Institutional culture refers to major national/local government organizations which traditionally rely on public funding and are the target of a state/regional cultural policy. There is then the so called “independent culture” expressed by artists and professionals networks, foundations and associations which are not institutionalized and hence pursue their own form of cultural policy, promoting initiatives of their choice. Finally there is the “market-oriented culture” which corresponds basically to the creative industries whose outputs are by definition quite easy to export.

In a context of globalism there must obviously be interaction among the different cultural strata and their respective cultural policies. However, as Švob-?oki? pointed out, this interaction is not clearly visible and further research is needed to understand the complex interplay of these cultural policies.

Culture in International Development

After having presented some examples of how globalization affects cultural policy within a national context, I will now address the outward-facing side of cultural policy, i.e. the discourse of culture in international development. As Jonathan Vickery(4) highlights, after World War II culture acquired on one side a “national dimension” thanks to its role in rebuilding national identities after the atrocities of the war but on the other hand it gained momentum also at international level with the creation of institutions such as the Council of Europe, the UNESCO and the EU. UNESCO has had a particularly significant role in promoting the idea of cultural diversity, stressing the role of national/world heritage in building a just society.

However, the politics of development implies the idea of “diagnosis”, it identifies what is lacking in the so called “developing countries”, according to the judgment of “advanced” Western countries. The result has been that global cultural policies are essentially based on Western models, revolving around the market economy embodied by the creative industries. More specifically many projects for cultural development address areas such as the tourism industry, world heritage sites economy and employment capability in the creative industries. Sustainable development and the global creative economy are clearly hot topics as it is evident from the Tallinn Manifesto which sets out “an agenda for a refreshed and re-invigorated

approach to knowledge development, collaboration, strategy and policy – across Europe and internationally”(5) to develop a “a Creative Economy which is productive, value-adding, sustainable, resilient, inclusive and fair. It does this from the specific perspective of emerging markets – to bring the ‘margins’ to the ‘centre’ so that a new wave of nations, regions and cities are able to develop genuinely productive Creative Economies on their own terms”(6).

The rhetoric behind all this says that if developing countries follow this Western model they will achieve social but more importantly economic growth and be able to compete in the global market. This raises, however, many ethical questions such as: are developed countries promoting “false hopes” and is culture in international development a form of modern colonialism?

A concrete example was presented by Dragicevic-Sesic who collaborated in the drafting of a cultural policy intended to foster Cambodia creative industries(7), with a focus on craftsmanship and performing arts. She pointed out that in Cambodia, contrary to what is the norm in Western countries, there is no art department in the education system simply because getting involved in artistic activities is not perceived as culturally relevant. In Cambodian society making art is usually what disabled people do and it is not a proper activity for able and healthy people to engage with. Hence, to promote a change in the education system to include for example drawing or music classes as we have in Western countries would appear to be patronizing and a strategy doomed to fail.

Cultural policy in the Arab Region

Interesting and fresh contributions to the conference came from a group of practitioners and researcher from the Arab region. The University of Hildesheim holds, in fact, since 2012 a UNESCO chair in Cultural Policy for the Arts in development. A specific focus of research is then represented by countries where the debates on cultural policy are in their infancy, namely African countries bordering the Mediterranean and countries in the sub-Saharan region. Thanks to this university connection, a key speaker presenting at the conference was Basma El Hussein, founder and managing director of Al Mawred Al Thaqafy (Culture Resource)(8) in Cairo, the first non-governmental regional cultural organization in the Arab region.

As all European countries already have well established cultural policies, which obviously evolve across time, pursuing different priorities, it might be an interesting intellectual exercise to imagine how we would devise from scratch an entirely new cultural policy for a new nation. This is, however, exactly what is happening in the Arab Countries following the events of the Arab Spring. Basma El Hussein highlighted the need to understand cultural policies within the political context that surrounds them and presented a paper about Egypt, describing the current situation and proposing a model for reform in the cultural sector. She talked about the role of the Ministry of Culture which as an institution was 55 years old and for the past twenty years the position of Culture Minister was held by the same person, a friend of Mubarak. This meant that the ministry was run with a very “personal style” resulting in administrative confusion with too many laws in place, some even in contradiction with each other; widespread lack of information and transparency resulting in the lack of historical data on the actual ministry expenditure to support the arts and culture, and no coordination with other ministries in related fields such as education, health etc. Hence, in Egypt there is a strong debate on the possibility to abolish completely the Ministry for Culture, devising new institutional bodies to perform the task of public support to the arts and culture. Taking such a situation into account it is clear that any reform could only be implemented if there is a strong government. In fact, cultural policy can exist only if there is a clear vision for culture.

To conclude the conference has been an opportunity to further the international debate on various topics which go beyond the exclusive field of cultural policy research in academia to touch upon other aspects

such as international development, social justice, the creative economy and sustainable urban development, which are relevant for the whole society.

Notes

(1) Klamer, Arjo, 2004, *Art as a common good*, Association of Cultural Economics International, 13th conference, p. 1-11.

(2) www.kbfus.org

(3) www.transnationalgiving.eu

(4) Vickery, Jonathan, *Crossing borders: cultural policy research and the politics of Development*

(5) Tallinn Manifesto – a Tool for Strategic Development across the Creative Economy, 2011, p. 3

[http://www.looveesti.ee/attachments/141 Tallinn Manifesto Re-thinking the Creative Economy Dec2011.pdf](http://www.looveesti.ee/attachments/141_Tallinn_Manifesto_Re-thinking_the_Creative_Economy_Dec2011.pdf)

Accessed 19/09/2014

(6) Tallinn Manifesto – a Tool for Strategic Development across the Creative Economy, p. 3

(7) UNESCO Experts Mission to Cambodia to Strengthen Cultural Policy and Development

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/diversity-of-cultural-expressions/programmes/technical-assistance/missions/cambodia/>

(8) <http://mawred.org/>

Webography

www.iccpr2014.de

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El Husseiny, Basma, *Developments in cultural policy during times of political crisis: perspectives from the Arab region*. Introductory presentation to thematic session at ICCPR2014

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Švob-?oki?, Nada, *Cultural stratifications and cultural policies: perspectives of globalism*. Paper presented at ICCPR2014

Tallinn Manifesto – a Tool for Strategic Development across the Creative Economy

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Tafter Journal

Esperienze e strumenti per cultura e territorio

Tafter Journal

scritto da Giulia Lasen il 9 Gennaio 2015

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